



Letter No. 3674.2012
Friday, July 13 2012
Creative Media & Broadcast Center
202-720-7079

BROADCASTERS LETTER

#3674.2012

Friday, July 13, 2012

(July 12)

VILSACK REACTS TO HOUSE AG COMMITTEE'S APPROVAL OF THE FOOD FARM AND JOBS BILL

"Americans deserve a farm and jobs bill that reforms the safety net for producers in times of need, promotes the bio-based economy, conserves our natural resources, strengthens rural communities, promotes job growth in rural America, and supports food assistance to low-income families.

Unfortunately, the bill produced by the House Agriculture Committee contains deep cuts in SNAP, including a provision that will deny much-needed food assistance to 3 million Americans, mostly low-income working families with children as well as seniors. The proposed cuts will deny 280,000 children in low-income families' access to school meals and reduce farm income across rural America. These cuts wouldn't just leave Americans hungry – they would stunt economic growth. The bill also makes misguided reductions to critical energy and conservation program efforts.

As the legislative process moves forward, the Administration will continue to seek policy solutions and savings across the Farm Bill that are consistent with the President's Budget."

Contact: Office of Communications 202-720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

THERE ARE NO PLANS TO ADJUST THE RENEWABLE FUELS STANDARDS

As corn crop prospects decline, some are wondering if the government will temporarily reduce the ethanol production mandate under the Renewable Fuels Standard.

Radio Story: [No Plans Now To Adjust Renewable Fuels Standards](#)

AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS STILL LAGGING BEHIND LAST YEAR'S PACE

U.S. meats, dairy products and other high value products are enjoying a good export year.

Radio Story: [U.S. Agricultural Exports Still Behind Last Year's Pace](#)

GOATS FOR HIRE TO GET RID OF PESKY, UNSIGHTLY AND UNWANTED WEEDS AND OVERRUN VEGETATION

Goats can come to the rescue to control unwanted plants. A Maryland forester has come up with an environmentally friendly way to control problem vegetation. Professional forester Brian Knox talks about how some localities are becoming more interested in using goats for ecological weed control.

Radio Story: [Goats Can Help Save Gardens And Rangeland
Eco-Friendly Vegetation Control](#)
[ACTUALITY: Local Government Interest In Grazing Goats](#)

(July 11)

STREAMLINED DISASTER DESIGNATION PROCESS WITH LOWER EMERGENCY LOAN RATES AND GREATER CRP FLEXIBILITY IN DISASTER AREAS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a package of program improvements and a mix of discretionary tools that will deliver faster and more flexible assistance to farmers and ranchers devastated by natural disasters and extreme weather incidents. Vilsack announced three significant improvements amending the Secretarial disaster designations: A final rule that simplifies the process for Secretarial disaster designations and will result in a 40 percent reduction in processing time for most counties affected by disasters; A reduced interest rate for emergency loans that effectively lowers the current rate from 3.75 percent to 2.25 percent; and A payment reduction on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands qualified for emergency haying and grazing in 2012, from 25 to 10 percent.

"Agriculture remains a bright spot in our nation's economy and it is increasingly important that USDA has the tools to act quickly and deliver assistance to farmers and ranchers when they need it most," said Vilsack. "By amending the Secretarial disaster designation, we're creating a more efficient and effective process. By delivering lower interest rates on emergency loans and providing greater flexibility for haying and grazing on CRP lands, we're keeping more farmers in business and supporting our rural American communities through difficult times. With these improvements, we're also telling American producers that USDA stands with you and your communities when severe weather and natural disasters threaten to disrupt your livelihood." A natural disaster designation makes all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency loans. The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to designate disaster counties to make disaster assistance programs available to farmers and ranchers.

Previous to these changes, the process had been in place for more than two decades and regulations had not been substantively revised since 1988.

The final rule for Secretarial disaster designations is amended as follows:

- Nearly automatically qualifies a disaster county once it is categorized by the U.S. Drought Monitor as a severe drought for eight consecutive weeks during the growing season. Effective July 12, 1,016 primary counties in 26 states will be designated as natural disaster areas, making all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met.
- Streamlines the USDA Secretarial designation process, which is expected to provide better service to farmers and ranchers by reducing by approximately 40 percent the amount of time required for designating a disaster area.
- Removes the requirement that a request for a disaster designation be initiated by a state governor or Indian tribal council, increasing the likelihood that counties will be covered. Indian tribal councils and governors may still submit a request for a designation, but it will not be required in order to initiate a disaster declaration.
- The same criteria currently being used for triggering a disaster designation will apply: a county must either show a 30 percent production loss of at least one crop countywide, or a decision must be made by surveying producers to determine that other lending institutions are not able to provide emergency financing. [View the Disaster Designations per the amended rule here.](#)

Contact: Office of Communications (202)720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [Vilsack Announces Steps To Help Farmers Hit By Weather Disasters](#)

[ACTUALITY: Vilsack Lists Actions To Respond To Disasters](#)

[ACTUALITY: USDA To Lower Emergency Loan Interest Rates](#)

USDA ANNOUNCES FUNDING TO IMPROVE RURAL ELECTRIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced \$287 million in loan guarantees for rural electric cooperatives and utilities in 15 states to receive loan guarantees to make improvements to generation and transmission facilities and implement smart grid technologies.

"Maintaining and upgrading rural electric systems creates jobs and supports economic development," said Vilsack. "These loans I am announcing will have a lasting impact on the rural landscape for generations to come. They will help ensure that rural areas can retain existing businesses, support new ones and have reliable, up-to-date infrastructure."

The funding announcement also includes \$10 million for Smart Grid Technology which will help utilities make efficiency improvements to the electric grid and help consumers lower their electric bills by reducing energy use in homes and businesses. This moves USDA Rural Development closer to reaching Secretary Vilsack's goal to fund more than \$250 million for smart grid technologies. [View a list of rural utilities projects here.](#)

Contact: USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

Story Info: [USDA Newsroom](#)

Radio Story: [USDA Helping New Rural Electric Infrastructure Projects](#)

WHAT DOES THIS SUMMER'S WEATHER PROBLEMS REMINDE YOU OF IN TERMS OF 1988?

The heat and drought this summer may remind some people of a severe drought 24 years ago that did major damage to corn and soybean crops. Meantime, if you raise any kind of livestock, rising feed prices are certainly not good news.

Radio Story: [Does This Summer's Weather Problems Remind You Of 1988?
Higher Feed Prices Will Impact Animal Agriculture](#)

(July 10)

THE CORN PRODUCTION FORECAST IS LOWERED

USDA's crop forecasts are showing the effects of heat and drought on many crops. This has resulted in a reduction in the production of certain crops. The unseasonably hot dry weather in much of the Corn Belt is starting to greatly impact the potential yields in this year's corn crop. While hot, dry weather is impacting yield forecasts for crop and soybeans, it is one of the factors going into USDA's price estimates for July. There have been times when the U.S. corn crop was in worse shape than now, but the condition of that crop is declining at a record fast pace.

Radio Story: [USDA Lowers Corn Production Forecast
Corn Yield Estimates Lowered In Latest USDA Forecast
Higher Price Estimates For Corn And Soybeans
A Record Setting Plunge In The Condition Of The Corn Crop](#)

IT'S APPROACHING WORST EVER CONDITIONS FOR PASTURES AND RANGELAND

The heat and drought are making July pastures and rangelands look like they sometimes do in August and September. By the end of the week some producers in a small part of the Corn Belt may see some rain.

Radio Story: [Pastures And Rangeland Approaching Worst Ever Condition
A Glimmer Of Hope For Rain In Parts Of The Corn Belt](#)

CONNECTING THE PAST TO THE FUTURE THROUGH TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

As part of their mission, tribal colleges make it a point to teach traditional agricultural practices in order to preserve and pass those traditions to the next generation. Native American tribal colleges teach students about traditional foods.

Radio Story: [Reinventing Agriculture, Connecting The Past To The Future
Tribal College Uses Of Traditional Natural Items](#)

(July 9)

**POSITIVE WEATHER FOR MANY FARMERS:
COOLER TEMPERATURES FOR MANY AND RAIN FOR A FEW**

Cooler temperatures are settling over many Corn Belt areas, but rains have skipped over many areas. Bradley Rippey, USDA meteorologist, saying the cool-down and the rain are making many southern farmers much happier. Rippey gives an update on crop progress and condition for many crops in the South this past week remained steady as stifling heat mostly remained at bay in crop growing regions.

Radio Story: [Cooler Temps For Many Farmers - Rain For A Few](#)
[ACTUALITY: Much Better Weather For Southern Crops](#)
[A Weather Reprieve For Southern Crops](#)

**THE EXTREME HEAT CONTINUES TO ADVERSELY
IMPACT THE NATION'S CORN AND SOYBEAN CROPS**

The Midwest in particular is experience the heat wave's impacts per development and condition of the corn crop. Many parts of the Midwest continue to experience blazing heat, which is impacting the soybean crops there.

Radio Story: [Extreme Heat Continues Impacts On Corn Crop](#)
[Soybean Crop In Midwest Feeling The Heat](#)

**THE USDA REASSESSES ITS
PREVIOUS YIELD FORECASTS**

Futures markets already trading on reduced yield expectations for corn and soybeans and USDA will issue its new yield forecasts in just a few hours. Gerry Bange, USDA Outlook Board Chairman, says his group will also issue on Wednesday morning, new assessments of crop situations in other countries.

Radio Story: [USDA Analysts Reassessing Their Previous Yield Forecasts](#)
[ACTUALITY: Crop Forecasts For Other Countries Also On The Way](#)

For more agriculture news visit www.USDA.gov





Learn more about President Lincoln's agricultural legacy [here](#).

[USDA Celebrates 150 Years](#)

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

(Feature Line-Up Subject To Change Prior to Update On July 17, 2012)

AGRICULTURE USA CD # 29.12 – One of the USDA's largest adjustments to its monthly crop reports ever occurred in July when corn yield forecasts were adjusted due to impacts from hot and dry weather extremes across much of the Corn Belt. Rod Bain looks at what the potential short and long term impacts are to this sudden decline in the corn crop, and some history for comparison, in this edition of "Agriculture USA".

CONSUMER TIME CD # 29.12 – A Regional Approach To Rural Economic Development, Focusing Food Security And Sustainability in Mozambique. What's Behind High Maple Syrup Prices? Avoiding Tomato Crop Catastrophes. The Right Soil And Container Are Key To Container Gardening.

AG UPDATE CD # 29.12 – New Steps To Help Farmers Cope With Disasters. Renewable And Biodiesel Fuels Effort Gets Funding Boost. Corn – The Top News Of USDA's July Crop Report. Is Corn Crop And Weather Like 1988? Making Ag Irrigation Systems Good To The Last Drop.

UPCOMING ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE – July 17 – Livestock, Dairy and Poultry Outlooks (ERS-WAOB); Crop Weather Report (WAOB). July 20 – Cattle On Feed Report (NASS). July 23 – Crop Progress Report (NASS). **These are USDA reports we know about in advance. The USDA Radio Newsline carries many stories every day that are not listed in this lineup.**

USDA Radio Newsline, 202-720-6776, 5:00pm ET

or

Go to www.usda.gov, click on Newsroom at top of the page, scroll down on right side of page until you see Radio and TV.

Then click on Daily Radio News Service or Weekly Radio Feature Service.

For questions about USDA Radio's Features, fax name, station, and address to 202-690-2165.

[USDA Radio and TV Programming](#)

OFF MIKE

NEW STATE AGRICULTURE SECRETARY COMING TO ARKANSAS – This will only be the second state Agriculture Secretary in Arkansas history. Last month **Governor Mike Beebe's** office announced 78-year-old **Dick Bell** would be retiring his post at the end of June. **Gary Diguseppe** said, the Secretary is nominated by a 20 member board appointed by the Governor and is confirmed by the Governor, and on June 27 the Board of Agriculture nominated **V. O. "Butch" Calhoun, Jr.** "I haven't heard yet whether he's been confirmed, but a spokesman for the Governor said he would be. **Calhoun** is 61 and lives in Des Arc. He farmed for 30 years in Prairie and White Counties. He is a former State Legislator and County Judge, and until now was director of the state Department of Rural Services."

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture was created in 2005 and **Bell**, the former CEO of Riceland Foods and a USDA Undersecretary in the 1970s, had been Secretary until now.

Wells Communications
Start a conversation

COLORADO WEATHER BRINGS CHALLENGES – Growing anything in Colorado, with its extreme temperatures and schizophrenic rainfall, is challenging, but farmers and ranchers along Colorado's front-range were hard hit early this year by almost no rain, record-breaking high temperatures and raging wildfires that threatened their farms and animals. That's the report from **Michele Wells** (Wells Communications – Denver, Colorado [Wells Communications](http://WellsCommunications.com)). **Wells** adds, "Rain arrived in buckets started on Friday, and there were many relieved and happy farmers and ranchers at Boulder County's Farmers Market last Saturday. The good side of all that sun and heat -- we are already harvesting zucchini, tomatoes, green beans, beats and other late summer crops."

***Broadcasters if you have any humanitarian or community service events
you'd like to share please forward to susan.carter@oc.usda.gov.
We love to hear about what you're doing and
share it with others in the farm broadcaster family.***

From all of us to all of you ... thank you for what you do

Compiled and Edited by **Susan Carter**
Radio Broadcaster/Reporter/Producer
202-720-7079 susan.carter@oc.usda.gov



United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Communications
Room 402-A
Washington, DC 20250-1300

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write:
USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call
(800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).*